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ABSTRACT

Since 1945, the proportion of literate adults in Korea has risen dramatically. One of the factors that has facilitated this rise is the current use of the "Hangul" alphabetic script, which is very consistent in its representation of sounds. Although the "Hangul" script was invented in 1443, it was not accepted officially in Korea until 1894; then, during the Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945, Koreans were not permitted to teach or to use Korean or the "Hangul" script in the schools. Therefore, it was not until the Japanese rule ended in 1945 that the use of the "Hangul" script was instituted in all the schools and that the majority of Koreans was taught to read. However, the average level of students' reading comprehension is estimated to be rather low, and reading does not yet fully serve as an effective tool in students' lives. Since 1945, reading instruction has dealt with two areas: guidance in independent reading and reading comprehension. Reading is not taught as a separate course but as a tool for learning other subjects. Reading instruction in Korea should have its own identity in the educational curriculum. To achieve this, an interdisciplinary reading curriculum could be developed in which reading objectives are organized in an integrated form of spiral curriculum. (GW)

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Reading and Reading Instruction--Past and Present in Korea

The Korean alphabet system, which is commonly called the Hangul script, was invented about five hundred and thirty years ago but the equality education in reading began to succeed only recently compared to the long history of the script. Then within a rather short span of thirteen years Korea witnessed the radical drop of 74.1% illiteracy rate since the year 1945 when she was liberated from the Japanese rule. The average level of students' comprehension, on the other hand, is estimated rather low and it is admitted that reading fails to fully play its functional role in general education. Of these facts the background will be briefly illustrated and the probable causes will be searched in the following discussion, in the hope that your inquiring minds will find it interesting enough to follow and helpful in weighing and considering the basic theory of constructing an interdisciplinary reading curriculum of the author's own suggestion at the concluding part of the paper.

To prevent you from "being lost in the chasms which result from the splitting of definitional hairs" (13), let me make clear the definition of reading employed in this paper. The author agrees on the

CS003578

operational definition of reading behavior and the tentatively summarized definition of reading produced by Gephart and his research group (4) which reads:

> "Reading behaviors are covert responses to verbal written language. These covert responses are indicated by overt performance which could not have occurred without the responses to the written language." (p. 149)
>
> "Reading is a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author becomes meaning in the mind of a reader. The interaction always includes three facets: material to be read; knowledge possessed by the reader; and physiological and intellectual activities.
>
> "NOTE: This definition does not imply that the meaning intended by the author automatically becomes the readers's meaning." (p. 174)

Two extremely different concepts of reading also appear in this paper: namely, "responding orally to printed symbols" in the discussion of literacy and "resulting in a changed view of life which produces corresponding changes in behavior" in the discussion of functional literacy, only because they are or were dominant in Korea. Reading instruction or guidance has aimed at either or both of them. The author understands the former definition as that of reading at the initial stage and the latter as end-products of reading, as was viewed by Clymer (2).

Rapid Eradication of Illiteracy

The equality education in reading began to be positively practiced by the government since 1945 when the illiteracy rate read as high as 78%, but the governmental survey (3) conducted in 1958 discloses that

only 4.1% of those above twelve years of age are illiterate. And in 1973 only 0.8% of the sixth graders (12 year olds) at the primary schools were reported to be illiterate in the Report on Assessing the Progress of School Education submitted by the Korean Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (10). Compulsory education, which began to be provided in 1962, has been so successful that the rate of school enrollment of children in school age has steadily increased to over 97% since 1974. The problem of equality education in reading at the initial stage is now almost completely solved, and that within this short period.

The rapid eradication of illiteracy was accomplished not because of certain miraculous teaching methods or amazingly splendid textbooks for teaching and learning Korean script. Reading has been taught in the various methods such as 'spelling' method, 'word' method, or 'sentence' method. These methods, however, have often been attacked by the proponents of 'systematic alphabet-centered' method or 'rote-memory of the basic syllable' method. The 'story' method was introduced in the new textbook in 1947 but no definite proof was produced that it exercised major influence upon the rapidity in eliminating illiteracy. There has always been only one textbook which has been revised or modified principally according to the changes of curriculum which took place three times since 1945.

But the rapid mass literacy was possible principally because of the following facts under the strong leadership of the government. The

Korean peninsula has been inhibited by a Mongoloid people--a single ethnic group with a common language and culture since her earliest migrants or invaders from northern China came to settle down probably by the third millinnium B.C. Even though her recorded history reveals that events on this small land have been affected by the dynamics of foreign powers such as dynastic changes in China, the Mongolian, Japanese and Manchu invasions, her people have fostered one culture. The Korean language is exclusively spoken in Korea, which is generally considered not to be related definitely to any particular language family. Korean is characterized by a richly developed set of derivative and conjugational affixes, which agglutinate one after another.

In addition, the Hangul or Korean alphabetic script which was developed at the instigation of King Se-jong in 1443, is a phonetic alphabet, that is to say, a consonant-vowel script containing 24 principal symbols with 14 consonant and 10 vowel symbols, which is simple and easy enough to be learned by anyone within a very short time. The Hangul alphabet is very consistent in its representation of sounds, each of the basic signs symbolizing its articulation and each syllable is written separately with the consistent pattern of consonant plus vowel, or consonant plus vowel plus consonant. That makes it easier to learn.

Then what had occurred in Korea concerning literacy problem and equality education in reading before 1945?

Toward Equality Education in Reading

Earlier than 1443 the Hanmun or Chinese ideographic script was read by and taught to the upper class males at the small private elementary school which was called the Sodang. The pupils spent hours at the Sodang learning to read and write the Chinese ideographs and memorizing selected passages chiefly from the works of Confucius. One of their major educational goals was to achieve a good performance in the periodic national examinations required through which one could qualify for government position.

For the middle and lower class people, a method of utilizing Chinese ideographs for their Koreanization was gradually developed over a period of many centuries, which is called Idu system. In the Idu system there were four principal ways of using the Chinese ideographs (5). Firstly, the Chinese characters were to be used with their original meaning and analogous pronunciation. Most of the Sino-Korean words or loan-words from Chinese sources have originated from this category. The Sino-Korean words are regarded by some authorities to represent approximately 54% of one hundred and fifty thousand entries of the Great Dictionary edited by the Korean Language Society in 1957. These are now an integral part of Korean vocabulary, for their pronunciation and usage have long been Koreanized. Second, Chinese ideographs were also to be used as a purely phonetic script. Third, great importance was attached to the Chinese original meaning. The final method was a mixture of the

second and third methods being used to write polysyllabic words. This complicated system of Idu was destined to be replaced by Hangul when it was invented.

Public acceptance of the new and easier Hangul script, however, was so slow because the upper class continued to patronize the Chinese script and ridiculing Hangul as "the women's script" fit only for the persons of little education, the commoner class and women.

It should not be overlooked, for a monent, that the Christian missionaries played an active role in the popularization of Hangul script and the eradication of illiteracy. They translated the Bible into Hangul and succeeded in attaching some value to literacy in order to make possible reading of the Bible.

Still, it was in 1894 that a compromise between Hangul and Hanmun scripts began to be officially accepted when a code of official conduct in government, which is known as the first Korean constitution embodying the spirit of the Reform of July 1894, was the most significant event in the modernizing of Korea, promulgated by King Ko-jong. The code was written in three ways, in Hangul, in Hanmun, and then in the mixture of the two. It was the first official document written exclusively in Hangul in the history of Korea. At the same time, the government opened modern educational institutes. Furthermore, the use and teaching of Hangul was legalized, not as a "women's script," but as the national script.

From then on until 1910, three ways of writing were common: in Hangul, in Hanmun, and in the mixture of the two different scripts. Still, Hanmun learning was virtually emphasized in the primary schools and teachers schools.

Then the time came when Korean and the Hangul script were not permitted to be used and learned. From 1910, when Korea was subjected by the Japanese colonial administration to cultural as well as political oppression, the Japanese made a concerted effort to educate the Koreans in the Japanese language and encouraged its use. Then the Koreans were forced to accept Japanese as their national language while the using and teaching of Korean at school was prohibited. Nevertheless, the Korean language was spoken among the people and the Hangul script together with the language was secretly taught and studied by the patriotic leaders.

In a word, the traditional and wrong attitude toward Hangul script and the Japanese rule prevented earlier achievement of equality education in reading. Today, all Korean students read books and textbooks written in Hangul only while they are supposed to learn about 1800 Chinese ideographs before they finish the senior high school.

Functional Literacy and Reading Instruction

Literacy and reading instruction discussed above was mainly concerned about basic literacy. Now we shall look over the problems of

reading and reading instruction after the initial stage. They will be weighed and considered in the two phases: reading guidance and comprehension, both included in the language curriculum.

Korean students do not read many books, nor do they have highly qualified comprehension abilities. Results of survey research (6, 7, 9) recently conducted disclose that they read in average one or two books a month spending one or two hours a day in reading--primary and secondary school pupils and university students all alike. Average scores on comprehension tests for each grade of the primary and junior high school range from the 50s to 60s (10, 12). These facts indicate that their reading is not functionalized well enough to serve them as an effective and efficient tool in their life, which suggests that something must be wrong with quality education in reading.

It is a general trend since 1945 that reading instruction is thought of in two different concepts; namely, reading guidance and comprehension teaching. Reading guidance is a systemized movement for reading more books and writing book-reports in each class and a school under the leadership of the principal and language teachers. The reading guidance usually includes three facets: book selection, organization of the movement, helping the students go ahead with reading books. Comprehension constitutes the most important part in the language teaching throughout the education systems, which is proved by the fact that normally more than two thirds of the test items constructed according to the educational

and behavioral objectives cover comprehension. But neither of these is the reading instruction proper. And that is why neither of reading guidance and comprehension teaching could be successful in helping the students develop their functional reading competence fully.

Reading guidance is based on the definition of reading which says that reading is resulting in changed view of life which produces corresponding changes in behavior, as was discussed earlier in this paper. It is the end-product of reading but not the right concept of reading. It is why reading guidance alone could not fully aid the students with their reading competence functionally developed for better and faster reading.

Teaching reading is one thing; teaching language and literature is another. A language and literature has its own meaning and structure to quote Phenix and Bruner (1, 11) that should be experienced by the students through its curriculum organized according to the theory of discipline-centered curriculum. The Korean language curriculum was revised in 1973 into a discipline-centered one. Theoretically, the role of reading in the language course has definitely fallen secondary to the learning of the meaning and structure of linguistic and literary knowledge. Reading became a tool in learning language arts, linguistic knowledge and literature as it is used as a tool for learning other subjects. Now is the time to do something for the determination of identity and role of reading and reading instruction in education and for general education. Reading should be taught in its own proper course with a systematically developed curriculum.

Interdisciplinary Reading Curriculum

Reading as a discipline began to be introduced to the Korean readers and educators early in 1974. In August a reading research department, the first one in Korea, was established in the Korean Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences. In 1975, the Korean Association for Reading Science, a national affiliate of the International Reading Association was founded. About six hundred research and practice reports and scholarly articles concerning reading and reading instruction were published during the years between 1945 and 1973 in Korea. At present, these are critically being reviewed in the light of "international reading science" for further achievement of equality and quality education in beginning reading and functionalization of reading competence for the eventual fulfillment of educational objectives in general.

To conclude this paper and to help you get a partial prospect of future reading and reading instruction in Korea, let me introduce to you an idea of mine for the construction of an interdisciplinary reading curriculum, which was presented in July to a research meeting of the Division of Curriculum, Korean Society for the Study of Education.

The author's theory is that the core of functional reading competence can be described as ever-developmental power and speed of getting meaning or abstracting ideas through the process of understanding relationships of concepts represented by the visible words (8). It determines the structure and shape of the reader's covert and overt reading

responses. When a reader's reading competence functions, certain facets exercise influences upon his or her reading responses. The facets include reading materials, the reader's knowledge and experiences, physiological and intellectual activities, reading purposes, interest and motives, the reader's reading attitudes and life philosophy.

On the other hand, each discipline supposedly has its own meaning and structure which are provided to the learners for their direct or vicarious experience. Theoretically, there must be an optimum reading strategy in each realm of meaning required of the learners for the maximum outcome of their learning experience. When the different reading strategies are identified, components of each strategy can be deducted, which will be translated into behavioral objectives in the light of reading educational objectives.

The written objectives will be organized into an integrated form of spiral curriculum with the core reading competence and related facets fully considered. In addition, the content scope, sequence and balance will also be considered together with the students' learning conditions. Reading competence consecutively developed in and through an interdisciplinary reading curriculum like this is expected to readily function in maximizing learning experiences in other fields than reading, and in turn the learning outputs will facilitate further development of reading competence.

It is predicted that planning of an interdisciplinary reading curriculum will prove a significant one step forward in the history

of reading education. It will make one step forward to the days when the school children will learn to read in the reading course proper, not "in their outside reading of stories and in their study of geography, history, and the like" (14). It will also make one step forward to the days when education virtually serve the new needs of individuals and our society (15) as educators teach students to develop in them a strong interest in continued study, to acquire the skills required to keep on with it, and to learn to use the intellectual apparatus of each one of the major fields of learning.

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